



School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

A Cross-Cultural Study: The Mediating Role of Organizational Identification on the
Relationship between Inclusive Leadership and Employee Well-being.
Empirical Evidence from Bulgaria and Ghana.

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Abstract

Leadership and its effects on well-being have undergone considerable psychological analysis throughout the past decade. An inclusive style of leadership brings positive outcomes to employee well-being. A new area for research has emerged suggesting that an individual's identity may contribute to this relationship. In this study, I investigated the effects of inclusive leadership on employee well-being; operationalized by work engagement and burnout, and further examined by the mediating role of organizational identification. The moderating role of nationality was also assessed. Data was collected by distributing an online questionnaire to 294 employees from Bulgaria and Ghana. Utilizing path analysis in AMOS software, results indicated that inclusive leadership is positively related to employee work engagement and organizational identification, and negatively related to burnout. Organizational identification mediated only the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement. Present cultural differences across sample groups indicate that leadership is not a "one size fits all" concept, and future research should aim to expand on the cross-cultural literature regarding inclusive leadership and employee well-being.

Keywords: inclusive leadership, employee well-being, organizational identification, Bulgaria, Ghana

Inclusive Leadership and its Effect on Well-being Mediated by Organizational Identification

The study of leadership is perhaps one of the most dominating research themes in social psychology (e.g., Yukl, 1998; Deanne & Hartog, 2001; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004). In broad terms, leadership can be described as a group process (Chemers, 2001). Due to organizational identity being a self-definition in terms of one's membership in a group (organization) (Peters, Tevichapong, Haslam, & Postmes, 2010), research perspectives propose that identity analysis might be the ultimate outlook to tackling controversies in leadership in organizations (Yukl, 1989; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004; Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007). In fact, research on leadership success advocates a more social identity focused realm (Yukl, 1989; Steffens, Haslam, Kerschreiter, Schuh, & van Dick, 2014), suggesting that above all, a successful leader must embed a shared sense of social identity with those they want to influence (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004; Haslam, Egghins, & Reynolds, 2003). In turn, the role of leadership assists employees to "satisfy" their need for social identification through their membership in the organization, referred to as *organizational identification* (Peters, Haslam, Ryan, & Steffens, 2016).

Inclusive leadership is a relatively new concept in the field, yet an increase in research pertains that this style fosters a positive influence on organizational outcomes and could shape employee well-being (Kuoppala, Lamminpää, Liira, & Vainio, 2008; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Steffens et al., 2014). To my knowledge no previous study has examined the relationship between leaders' inclusive behavior and employee well-being as mediated by employees' organizational identification, making it difficult to draw any conclusions. Furthermore, studies advocate the general notion that culture has an influence on leadership (e.g., Den Hartog, et al. 1999; Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2002), however, relatively few include or investigate the impact of the suggested cultural influence on organizational leadership (Dorfman, 1996). In fact, research reports a need for comparative cross-national studies (Ardichvili & Kuchinke,

2002), as the corporate world is rapidly developing into a multi-cultural environment (Lok & Crawford, 1999).

Based on the aforementioned premises, the purpose of the present study is to propose and demonstrate a new research relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being, while taking into account employees' identification with their organization and aim to further investigate potential cultural variations. In the present study, I am interested in two questions that still remain scientifically unanswered: *To what extent does inclusive leadership influence employee well-being - does organizational identity mediate this relationship? Furthermore, does nationality moderate the relationship between inclusive leadership and well-being?*

Leadership and Inclusive Leadership

Bennis and Nanus (1985) define leadership as “an organizational culture that helps employees to generate a sense of meaning in their work” (cited in Sveningsson & Larsson, 2006, p. 149). It is an essential tool, almost obligatory, to the functioning of organizations within every society (Wren, 1995). A majority of researchers have come to an agreement that leadership can be defined as the process of providing assistance and guidance to employees' assumed tasks or a group's assumed functions, through direct or indirect influence on their behavior (Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Yukl, 1989; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Inclusive leadership. Hollander (2012) defines inclusive leadership as “doing things with people, rather than to people” (p. 3). With today's workforce gradually becoming more culturally diverse, inclusion has taken a front line position as a fundamental part of leadership (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Nembhard & Edmondson 2006; Ryan, 2007). As a result, a particular style of leadership – that of inclusive leadership – has gathered considerable attention and interest (Hirak, Peng, Carmeli, & Schaubroeck, 2012). In a leadership setting, inclusion is a term used to refer to an individual's tendency to think of the

self in association with a certain group, and in turn perceive the group's characteristics applicable to the self (Turner & Haslam, 2001).

Taking into account inclusion as the underlying concept, inclusive leadership style is generally portrayed as “those leaders who exhibit openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with followers” (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010, p.250). This particular style distinguishes itself from other styles by including an active role of the follower in constructing the leadership-follower relationship. It provides an atmosphere that promotes fairness of input and output to all (Hollander, 2012). Thus, leader inclusiveness (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), tends to focus on both parties further contributing to a positive effect on followers' well-being.

As inclusive leaders tempt and appreciate followers' input (Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004; Nembhard & Edmondson 2006), followers develop a sense of trust, empowerment and fairness, and may further perceive the organization as a social entity expressing genuine appreciation for their opinion (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). Hollander (2012) also distinguished inclusive leadership as a reciprocal process, with leaders taking into account followers' needs, followers perceive their leaders as available and supportive and in turn take into account leaders' needs (Carmeli et al., 2010). Perceived psychological safety is developed through leader's genuine inclusion, support and concern (Carmeli et al., 2010). These insights suggest that inclusive leadership may have a much deeper stance in benefiting followers and extend into their perception of the organization as a whole.

Identity and Organizational Identification

Adams et al. (2016) explain identity as “how people define themselves in relation to others and within the context in which they find themselves” (p.123). The rather complex concept of identity is primarily social in nature (Adams & Crafford, 2012). Through self-

identification, individuals are able to locate themselves in the social environment and develop a perception of belongingness to a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In an organizational context, identity has been researched on several levels of analysis (Brown, 2001). A more recent one being *organizational identification* (Ashforth & Mael, 1996); a follower identifying with the organizational entity and sharing characteristics of the organization's members (Mael & Tetrick, 1992). This also encompasses an employee's experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), identification with the organization enables employees to internalize organizational values and beliefs, as well as, feel loyalty, solidarity and commitment towards the organization.

Organizational identification and inclusive leadership. Patchen (1970) supports the idea that interpersonal relationships affect the way individuals identify with an organization. Inclusive leaders, who perform supportive behaviors, may meet employees' organizational needs for approval and membership. In turn, this could lead to increased organizational identification among those employees. For instance, providing employees with an opportunity to partake in decision making (Hollander, 2012), may serve as a motivating power to the emergence of employees' organizational identification and sense of belonging (Patchen, 1970; Eisenberger et al., 2001). Hung, Ansari, and Aafaqi (2004) found that when employees have a positive relationship with management, they exhibit a higher level of organizational commitment. Based on the aforementioned research, my first hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Inclusive leadership has a positive relationship with organizational identification.

Well-being at Work: Work Engagement and Burnout.

When examining an organizational setting, it is not surprising to see that leadership style may have an active role on employee well-being, while also being a predictor of employee's general health (McMurray, Pirola-Merlo, Sarros & Islam, 2010). Well-being is a broad term that can be operationalized by two opposing concepts (Schaufeli, Taris, & Van Rhenen, 2008): work engagement and burnout. Work engagement is a concept defined as a positive, work-related state of mind constructed of three dimensions: (1) *vigor* (i.e. high levels of energy while working); (2) *dedication* (i.e. a sense of enthusiasm and pride); and (3) *absorption* (i.e. being fully concentrated in one's work) (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). While burnout is a term used to describe a state of mental fatigue (Maslach, 1993; Schaufeli et al., 2008), it is constructed of three dimensions: (1) *exhaustion* (i.e. draining of emotional resources); (2) *cynicism* (i.e. indifference towards work); and (3) *professional efficacy* (i.e. tendency to evaluate one's occupational accomplishment negatively) (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Work engagement and inclusive leadership. Leadership is a major factor affecting work engagement (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011), because leader behavior acts not only as a source of motivation and satisfaction for employees, but also creates a healthy environment to support employee work engagement (Choi, Tran, & Park, 2015). Choi et al. (2015) argue that when the leader is using an inclusive style, this may exert a considerable influence on work engagement as the leader is focused on fulfilling employee needs (Hollander, 2012). The authors further explore the reciprocal processes through the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964): when one party does something that is valuable for another, the receiving party will reciprocate with something equally valuable. When an employee receives socioemotional resources from the leader of the organization – through the

leader's use of an inclusive leadership style – the employee feels obliged to repay the organization, and work engagement is one method of such repayment (Saks, 2006).

Current inclusive leadership studies have revolved around alternative well-being measures: life satisfaction and job satisfaction. By being an open, available, and accessible leader to followers (Hollander, 2012), this behavior may increase employees' overall life satisfaction (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Hollander, 2012). A study conducted by Hardré and Reeve (2009) suggests that when leaders use a more supportive management style, followers perceive a supportive work environment, increasing their overall job satisfaction. In general, results by Stocker, Jacobshagen, Krings, Pfister, and Semmer (2014) show that when leaders provide social support and feedback in the form of gratitude, employees' overall well-being is positively impacted.

Other studies have been conducted to examine the positive impact of different leadership styles on employee work engagement, confirming a relationship between the two measures. For example, current literature has focused on transformational (Ghadi, Fernando, & Caputi, 2013), authentic (Alok, & Isreal, 2012) and servant leadership (De Clercq, Bouckenooghe, Raja, & Matsyborska, 2014), however, there has been a gap in research when it comes to specifically examining inclusive leadership and work engagement (Choi et al., 2015). Therefore, based on the aforementioned premises, I believe that examining the relationship between leaders' inclusive behavior and employees' work engagement could contribute to current research on successful leadership practices. I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Inclusive leadership has a positive relationship with work engagement.

Burnout and inclusive leadership. It has been suggested that a good leader could successfully alleviate the escalation of burnout; a feeling which can affect employee well-being through turnover, absenteeism, poor organizational commitment, and low job satisfaction (Landsbergis, 1988; Reader, Cuthbertson, & Decruyenaere, 2008). Empowering leader behavior can enhance the person–job fit and prevent burnout (Greco, Laschinger, & Wong, 2006). Inclusive leaders empower employees by accepting different viewpoints, making employees feel included and reflecting on their needs (Hollander, 2012). Employees are likely to acknowledge the leader’s support and inclusion, which in turn, minimizes major antecedents of burnout such as feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and role stress (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001; Hollander, 2012).

To my knowledge, there has been no empirical study assessing the direct effect of inclusive leadership on burnout. However, research has identified a negative relationship between alternative leadership styles and burnout, for instance, servant leadership (Rude, 2004). This finding is explained by the empowering behavior of servant leaders, who make it their priority to develop and take into consideration the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977). As the characteristics of a servant leader are also consistent with those of an inclusive leader, it is reasonable to hypothesize a negative relationship between inclusive leadership and burnout. Consequently, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Inclusive leadership has a negative relationship with burnout.

Organizational Identification and Well-being.

According to Blader and Tyler (2009), social identity is a critical ingredient for understanding the psychological basis of people’s engagement with their organization. In their study, Van Dick et al., (2004) have found a strong positive relationship between

organizational identification and job satisfaction, suggesting that future research should focus on organizational identification as a relevant concept to well-being. Other studies (Agyemang, & Ofei, 2013; Amponsah-Tawiah, & Mensah, 2016) have examined a similar concept, organizational commitment, and have identified its positive relationship with work engagement. A fair amount of research on social identity processes suggests that there is a negative relationship between organizational identification and burnout (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005). For instance, Avanzi, Schuh, Fraccaroli and Dick (2015) have concluded that employees who exhibit a strong identification with their organization are more likely to receive social support from their colleagues, promoting a sense of collective efficacy and a negative relation to burnout.

If organizational identification does have a direct impact on promoting work engagement and burnout alleviation, this could be a very important finding that should be considered by Human Resource professionals within organizations. Grounded on the aforementioned, I propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a): Organizational identification is positively related to work engagement.

Hypothesis 3b (H3b): Organizational identification is negatively related to burnout.

Inclusive Leadership, Organizational Identification and Well-being.

To my knowledge, there has been no previous empirical study to assess the mediating effect of organizational identification on the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement. Liu, Siu, & Shi, (2010) have examined comparable concepts, and have concluded that employees' trust in the leader partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being in the form of job satisfaction. Liu, Siu,

and Shi (2010) note that earlier studies have also suggested trust in leaders as a significant mediator between transformational leadership and followers' outcomes.

In a similar vein, I have not come across any research examining the specificity of the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between inclusive leadership and burnout. However, a study by Laschinger, Wong and Grau (2013) has identified a similar partial mediating role of structural empowerment on the relationship between authentic leadership and burnout. Replacing structural empowerment and authentic leadership with organizational identification and inclusive leadership, it seems plausible for my study to yield similar results as that of Laschinger et al. (2013).

Considering my Hypothesis 1, Hypotheses 2a and 2b, 3a and 3b together, and in light of findings reviewed, I believe that my study will begin to close the existent gap in research and create a new area for exploration. Taking into account all three of my measures, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4a (H4a): Organizational identification partially mediates the positive relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement.

Hypothesis 4b (H4b): Organizational identification partially mediates the negative relationship between inclusive leadership and burnout.

National Context

There are a vast number of studies on leadership and leadership styles; however, few include or investigate the impact of cultural influences on leadership styles (Dorfman, 1996). Yukl (1998) argues that most of the research on leadership during the past half century has been conducted in the United States, Canada and Western Europe. Although Hofstede (1993) argued that there are no universal leadership theories, others suggest that specific cultural

traditions, values, ideologies, and norms are bound to differentiate between societies (House, Hanges, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2002).

The current research will explore whether a cultural difference exists in terms of inclusive leadership style and employee well-being, between two non-Western countries: Bulgaria and Ghana. Hofstede's (2011) indulgence-restraint cultural dimension, examines the level of restraint a culture places on a country. Bulgaria scores very low, a score of 16 (Hofstede, 2011), and is thus characterized as having a strongly restrained culture (Ilieva, 1999). The dominant stance of such a culture is that people perceive their actions as restrained by social norms, having a tendency to cynicism and pessimism (Ilieva, 1999). Ghana scores much higher on the indulgence-restraint dimension, a score of 72 (Hofstede, 2011), and is characterized as having an indulgent culture. In this type of society, people exhibit a need for gratification of basic and natural human drives. In other words, people tend to possess a positive and optimistic attitude, seeking leisure time and enjoyment.

Hofstede's (2011) indulgence-restraint cultural dimension is in effect a measure of happiness and consequently well-being (Minkov, 2011). The World Values Survey (WVS) (2006), is a worldwide research survey exploring individual's values and beliefs, and has found that the highest percentages of extremely happy individuals are in the indulgent parts of the world, like Ghana (Inglehart, & Klingemann, 2000). The lowest percentages of very happy individuals are in Eastern European countries, like Bulgaria (Inglehart, & Klingemann, 2000). It is crucial to note that when the same respondents are asked how healthy they feel, a similar pattern is observed based on the happiness distribution: subjective well-being is negatively associated with the restraint cultural dimension. In other words, individuals from a restrained society are less happy and perceive themselves as less healthy, compared to individuals from an indulgent society.

In considering all aforementioned theoretical assumptions, I would like to investigate whether such a large cultural difference exists in terms of leadership, identity and well-being between Eastern Europe and Africa, by using two representative countries: Bulgaria and Ghana. I make the following proposition:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Employee nationality moderates all relationships, presenting differences, between inclusive leadership, organizational identification, work engagement and burnout across groups.

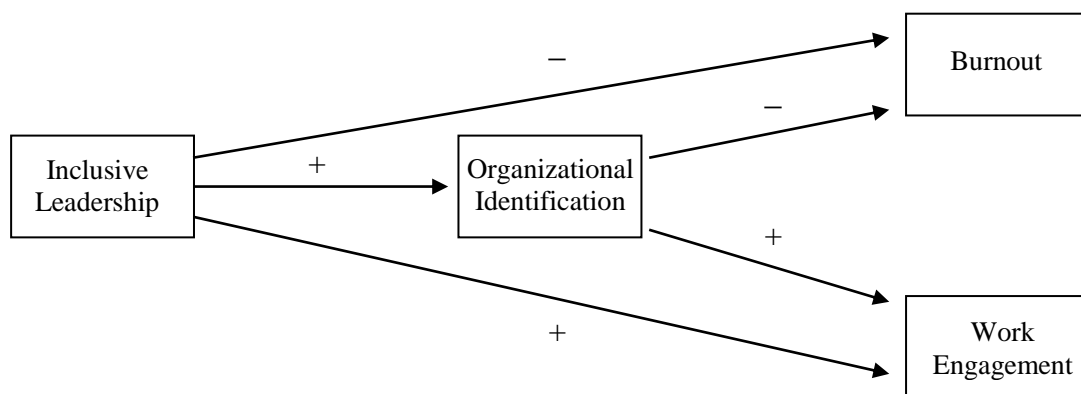


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the relationships between Inclusive Leadership, Organizational Identity, Work Engagement and Burnout. Moderator: Nationality.

Method

Participants and procedure

Data was collected from 294 employees (56.5% females, $M_{\text{age}} = 35.57$ years, $SD = 10.77$) as a part of a larger study on identity, leadership and well-being. The sample consisted of 129 Bulgarian employees (65.1% females, $M_{\text{age}} = 40.47$ years, $SD = 11.83$) and 165 Ghanaian employees (49.7% females, $M_{\text{age}} = 31.64$ years, $SD = 7.92$). A criterion for participation in the current study was a minimum of one year in employment experience.

Participants were inclusive of all hierarchal levels within organizations across Bulgaria and Ghana, and from various educational levels. Sample statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Sample descriptive statistics per sample group

	Sample group (nationality)	
	Bulgaria	Ghana
Mean age (<i>SD</i>)	40.47 (11.83)	31.64 (7.92)
Mean tenure (<i>SD</i>)	9.08 (8.61)	4.29 (4.42)
Gender (female %)	65.1	49.7
Education (%)		
No education	-	0.6
Middle school	-	1.8
High school	8.5	7.9
Bachelor's	21.7	23.6
Master's	54.3	30.3
Doctorate	11.6	-

The “Experiences@Work II” questionnaire, which takes approximately 25 minutes to complete, is part of a larger research project: “Experiences@Work”. Data from Bulgaria was collected from several organizations within the country that I contacted independently, whereas data from Ghana was obtained in collaboration with a fellow research colleague from Tilburg University. For Bulgaria, the questionnaire was translated into the respective national language: Bulgarian. In Ghana measures were administered in English, a national language. All data was collected through an electronic platform, Qualtrics (2016).

Ethical considerations. In accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) guidelines, it is required to receive approval prior to conducting research. Thus, permission was proposed from the organizational psychology commission at Tilburg University and an ethical consideration form was completed.

Several organizations were approached and employees were asked to complete the questionnaire only if willing to accept. It was my main focus to prevent all participants from

any physical or psychological harm. All participants had the right to remain anonymous and all information provided by the participant remained strictly confidential. Participants were obliged to complete a consent form to ensure ethical behavior.

Participants were informed of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the research process at any time. Furthermore, information was provided in terms of whom individuals should contact regarding questions or concerns. Lastly, I guarantee that my current research is not plagiarized from other scholars and all work is credited and cited in accordance with APA standards (APA, 2010).

Measures

Within my research, the constructs inclusive leadership, work engagement, burnout and organizational identification were measured.

Sociodemographic questionnaire. Participants provided their age, tenure, gender, and nationality. Chi-square analysis indicated that the relation between nationality and gender is significant, $\chi^2(1, N=294) = 7.00, p = .008$, with more female participants in the Bulgarian group. A one-way ANOVA analysis indicated that the relation between nationality and age, and nationality and tenure are significant: age, $F(1, 288) = 57.507, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .02$; tenure, $F(1, 291) = 38.032, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .12$. For both tests, differences between means are based on the Welch and Brown-Forsythe test (age: 52.85, $p = .000$; tenure: 33.07, $p = .000$) since I had violated Levene's test for homogeneity of variances. Despite reaching statistical significance with more elder and tenured participants in the Bulgarian sample, the actual difference in mean scores is quite small ($\eta_p^2 = .02$ and $\eta_p^2 = .12$).

Inclusive leadership. The scale (Van Engen and Meyers, 2014) has 17 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). All items start with "My leader...". Item examples include, "My leader respects others' differences" and "My leader encourages others to use their talents".

Organizational identity. The organizational identification measure by Mael and Ashforth (1992) is a six-item measure, assessing individual's relationship with their organization. Item examples include: "This organization's successes are my successes" and "When I talk about this organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'"

Work engagement. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9, Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006) has 9 items, rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Always*). Item examples include, "At work, I feel bursting with energy" and "I get carried away when I'm working".

Burnout. The exhaustion sub-scale (UBOS) (Schaufeli & van Dierendonck, 2000) utilized in the study is an adaptation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS; Maslach, 1993). It consists of 5 items, rated on a 7-point type Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Always*). Item examples include: "I feel mentally drained from my work" and "Working all day is really a strain for me".

In psychometrics, reliability is the accuracy of the scores of a measure (Cronbach, 1947). Cronbach's Alpha (α) is a measure of the internal consistency of items in a scale with alpha values ranging from 0.00 to +1.00. An alpha greater than 0.70 is desirable for research purposes and considered reliable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Within my study, all measures were analyzed as reliable; alpha levels are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Measure reliabilities as measured by Cronbach's alpha

Measures	# of Items	Bulgaria	Ghana
		Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha
Inclusive Leadership	17	.97	.96
Organizational Identification	6	.92	.89
Work Engagement	9	.94	.87
Burnout	5	.88	.85

Note. Internal consistencies were excellent (Cronbach's $\alpha > .9$) or good (Cronbach's $\alpha > .8$) (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc., 2013) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS; Byrne, 2016). Third, I tested my hypothesis through path analysis in AMOS.

Preliminary analysis. The first analyses were preliminary, consisting of missing data analysis, normality, linearity and outlier checks. Psychometric properties of the measures were assessed through reliability testing using SPSS and multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) using AMOS. As the current study is of cross-cultural nature, it is of primary importance to ensure that all measurement scales assess the same constructs across Bulgaria and Ghana. MGCFA was utilized to test measurement invariance (Steenkamp, & Baumgartner, 1998). The present study adhered to three levels of measurement invariance: *configural invariance*, *metric invariance* and *scalar invariance*. *Configural invariance*, often used as a baseline, is achieved if the model of interest fits across groups, providing an indication of the general factor structure. *Metric invariance*, a second level of invariance, implies cross-cultural equality of the intervals of the scale on which the latent concept is measured. The last and strongest level of invariance, *scalar invariance*, must be achieved to justify comparing the means of the latent variables across countries (Steenkamp, & Baumgartner, 1998).

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistical analyses were used to examine the demographic variables in the data (e.g., age) through evaluation of means, standard deviations, and distributions. Also, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) (Gueorguieva, & Krystal, 2004) was used in order to study the relationship between group means. A MANOVA allows for analysis of the interactions amongst multiple interdependent and dependent variables (Warne, 2014). All 7 underlying assumptions were tested prior to running a MANOVA.

Hypothesis testing. In order to analyze dependent and independent variables and test the relationship between leadership, identity, work engagement and burnout, a path model was tested using AMOS software.

Results

Preliminary analysis

I ran an MGCFA analysis to examine measurement invariance for all measures across both sample groups as presented in Table 3. For inclusive leadership, configural invariance

Table 3.

Measurement Invariance for inclusive leadership, work engagement, burnout and organizational identification

Measures	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	BCC
Inclusive Leadership						
Configural invariance	2.87***	.89	.90	.08	816.34	836.44
Metric invariance	2.75***	.89	.90	.07	801.86	817.37
Scalar invariance	2.79***	.89	.89	.08	894.32	914.71
Partial scalar invariance	2.70***	.90	.90	.07	866.72	888.26
Organizational Identification						
Configural invariance	2.67***	.95	.97	.07	96.10	98.56
Metric invariance	2.33***	.96	.97	.06	91.79	93.74
Scalar invariance	3.51***	.92	.93	.09	152.05	154.62
Partial scalar invariance	2.58***	.95	.96	.07	123.79	126.56
Work Engagement						
Configural invariance	2.81***	.92	.94	.07	220.66	226.66
Metric invariance	2.61***	.93	.94	.07	215.70	220.50
Scalar invariance	4.21***	.86	.87	.10	364.29	370.44
Partial scalar invariance	2.83***	.92	.93	.07	267.83	274.73
Burnout						
Configural invariance	2.44**	.95	.97	.07	64.44	66.19
Metric invariance	1.90*	.97	.98	.05	58.71	60.11
Scalar invariance	5.30***	.87	.88	.12	142.77	144.60

Note. Partial scalar invariance not obtained for burnout indicating no identical item intercepts, thus eliminated from this table. When reading comparing models, the Partial Scalar Invariance Model needs to be compared with the Full Metric Invariant Model. TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; AIC = Akaike Information Criterion; BCC = Browne–Cudeck Criterion. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

was obtained after I correlated errors 16 and 17. Metric invariance was obtained. Full scalar invariance was not achieved, thus I released intercepts 1, 2, 5, 12 and 13 and achieved partial scalar invariance. For organizational identification, configural and metric invariance were obtained. Full scalar invariance was not achieved, thus I released intercepts 2, 4 and 6 and achieved partial scalar invariance.

For work engagement, configural invariance was obtained after I correlated errors for items 1 and 2, and for items 7 and 8. Metric invariance was obtained. Full scalar invariance was not achieved, thus I released intercepts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 and achieved partial scalar invariance. For burnout, configural and metric invariance were obtained. Full scalar invariance was not achieved, thus I released intercepts 2, 4 and 5. Despite this change, partial scalar invariance was still not achieved, indicating no identical item intercepts across groups.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in the study, including correlations, means and standard deviations of variables. Table 4 presents Pearson correlations between inclusive leadership, organizational identification, work engagement and burnout.

Table 4.
Correlations between inclusive leadership, organizational identification, burnout and work engagement

Measure	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Inclusive Leadership	-			
2. Organizational Identification	.30**	-		
3. Work Engagement	.39**	.39**	-	
4. Burnout	-.27**	-.23**	-.31**	-

Note. Correlations were small ($r = .10$ to $.29$) or medium ($r = .30$ to $.49$) (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013) ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Moderate, positive correlations were found between inclusive leadership and organizational identification, $r = .30$, $p < .01$, between inclusive leadership and work engagement, $r = .39$, $p < .01$, and between organizational identification and work engagement, $r = .39$, $p < .01$. Small, negative correlations were found between inclusive leadership and burnout, $r = -.27$, $p < .01$, and between organizational identification and burnout, $r = -.23$, $p < .01$. Additionally, a moderate, negative correlation was found between work engagement and burnout, $r = -.31$, $p < .01$.

Next, I conducted a MANOVA in order to establish the differences between my sample groups on all variables: dependent (inclusive leadership, organizational identification, burnout and work engagement) and independent (nationality). In accordance with the MANOVA requirements, all 7 underlying assumptions (Haase & Ellis, 1987) were tested and met prior to running the analysis. After running a MANOVA analysis, I obtained a statistically significant differences between the Bulgarian and Ghanaian groups on all variables [Wilks' $\Lambda = .82$; $F(4, 287) = 14.90$, $p = .000$; $\eta_p^2 = .17$]. When further examined separately, both groups were found to differ on all four dependent variables. Table 5 shows a summary of univariate results, inclusive of means and standard deviations for all measures across groups.

Table 5.
Variable means and standard deviations across groups

Mesures	Bulgaria		Ghana		$F(1,290)$	η_p^2
	M	SD	M	SD		
Inclusive Leadership	3.38	0.78	3.77	0.78	18.19***	.06
Organizational Identification	3.50	0.85	3.95	0.80	21.13***	.07
Work Engagement	4.85	1.09	5.28	0.99	12.17**	.04
Burnout	4.12	0.99	3.28	1.11	44.25***	.13

Note. η_p^2 = partial eta squared effect size indicator.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis Testing

To test my hypotheses I created a path model using AMOS Software. The fit of four nested models were tested: unconstrained, structural weights, structural covariances and structural residuals, presented in Table 6.

Table 6.
Fit Statistics for Multi-Group analysis

Model	χ^2/df	AGFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf
Original Model							
Unconstrained	6.08**	.80	.47	.91	.13	12.16	2
Structural weights	3.57***	.89	.73	.84	.09	25.01	7
Structural covariances	3.15***	.90	.78	.85	.09	25.18	8
Structural residuals	2.66**	.92	.83	.84	.08	29.29	11
Modified Model - saturated							
Unconstrained	-	-	-	1.00	-	.00	0
Structural weights	.79	.97	1.02	1.00	.00	2.37	3
Structural covariances	.64	.98	1.04	1.00	.00	2.54	4
Structural residuals	.89	.97	1.01	1.00	.00	7.14	8
Final Modified Model							
Unconstrained	2.12	.93	.88	.98	.06	4.23	2
Structural weights	1.42	.95	.96	.99	.04	5.68	4
Structural covariances	1.17	.96	.98	.99	.02	5.86	5
Structural residuals	1.17	.96	.98	.99	.02	10.54	9

Note. AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

First, the structural weights model from the Original Model (see Figure 1) provided a poor fit, $\chi^2 (7, N = 294) = 25.01, p = .001$; $\chi^2 / df = 3.57$; CFI = .84; RMSEA = .09, as the difference in CFI values was larger than .01 between the unconstrained and structural weights models. According to modification indices, I added covariance between burnout and work engagement. Despite the addition of this covariance, a good fit was still not achieved. The next step was to assess individual paths. Two paths with the lowest CFI values were released: the path between organizational identification and work engagement and the path between inclusive leadership and work engagement. After this change, the structural residuals model in the new Modified Model proved to be the model of best fit, $\chi^2 (8, N = 294) = 7.14, p = .521$;

$\chi^2 / df = 0.89$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00. However, as can be seen in Table 6, my Modified Model had become saturated, meaning that there are no more parameters to account for. To improve the condition of my model further, I completely removed the path between organizational identification and burnout, as it was non-significant for both Bulgaria and Ghana. This change led to the Final Modified Model with the structural residuals model accounting for the best fit, $\chi^2 (9, N = 294) = 10.54, p = .309$; $\chi^2 / df = 1.17$; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .02.

In line with my first hypothesis, stating that inclusive leadership will have a positive relationship with organizational identification, results were found significant ($\beta = .25, p < .001$), supporting H1. Inclusive leadership and work engagement also had a significant positive relationship as predicted, and supporting H2a. This path was released indicating statistical differences between the two groups, with a stronger relationship for the Ghanaian sample, ($\beta = .40, p < .001$), than for the Bulgarian sample, ($\beta = .17, p < .05$). H2b, stating that inclusive leadership will have a significant negative relationship with burnout, did reach significance, ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$). Thus, H2b is supported.

H3a, stating that there is a positive relationship between organizational identification and work engagement, is partially supported with significant results for the Bulgarian sample ($\beta = .44, p < .001$). H3b, stating that there is a negative relationship between organizational identification and burnout, is rejected due to insignificant results for both groups.

H4a, stating that organizational identification partially mediates the positive relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement, is supported with significant results for the Bulgarian sample, ($\beta = .10, p < .05$). H4b, stating that there will be a negative partial mediation of organizational identification on the relationship between inclusive leadership and burnout, is rejected, as results were non-significant for both sample groups. Nationality was only a moderator in H2a and H4a, resulting in partial support of H5.

To measure indirect effects between groups, a bootstrap analysis was performed. The standardized regression coefficients between inclusive leadership and work engagement, and between inclusive leadership and burnout, controlling for organizational identification, are in parentheses and presented in Figure 2.

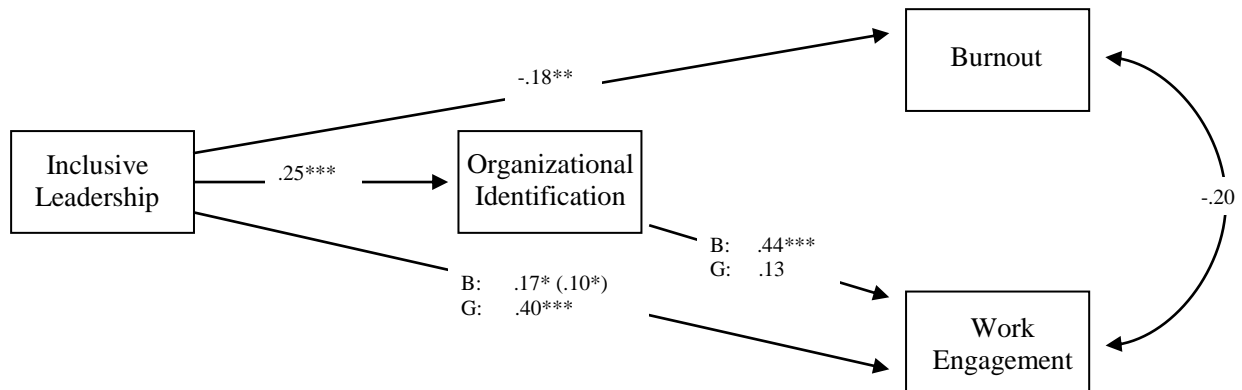


Figure 2. The relationships between Inclusive Leadership, Organizational Identification, Work Engagement and Burnout.

Note. Average standardized regression coefficients presented. B = Bulgaria, G = Ghana. The standardized regression coefficients between Inclusive Leadership and Work Engagement, and between Inclusive Leadership and Burnout, controlling for Organizational Identification, are in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The main aim of my study was to investigate the mediating role of organizational identification between a leader's inclusive leadership style and employees' well-being, in terms of work engagement and burnout across Bulgaria and Ghana. I expected and confirmed a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational identification (H1). Inclusive leadership was positively related to work engagement (H2a) and negatively related to burnout (H2b), confirming both hypotheses. For organizational identification and work engagement, I expected a positive relationship (H3a), however findings indicated significance only for the Bulgarian group, partially confirming my hypothesis. I expected a negative

relationship between organizational identification and burnout (H3b), as well as, organizational identification to mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and burnout (H4b). Both hypotheses were rejected. Organizational identification did mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement for Bulgaria only partially supporting (H4a). Ultimately, employee nationality seemed to moderate only the relationships between inclusive leadership and work engagement and between organizational identification and work engagement, partially supporting my expectations that nationality would moderate all hypothesized relationships (H5).

In both samples, results indicated that inclusive leaders can influence employees' organizational identification, work engagement and burnout. This is in line with previous studies that suggest leaders' inclusive behavior as a way of fostering a sense of belonging and identification with the organization (Patchen, 1970; Eisenberger et al., 2001). Furthermore, when employees feel accepted and supported by their leader, they are more likely to engage in their work and align their personal values and goals with those of the organization, as illustrated by the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Consistent with Greco et al., (2006), leader empowering behavior can minimize burnout, by reducing the antecedents, for instance, work related stress (Maslach et al., 2001; Hollander, 2012). My study confirms the effectiveness of inclusive leadership to enhance employees' organizational identification and work engagement.

It is important to note psychological differences across groups, with inclusive leadership exhibiting a stronger influence on work engagement in Ghanaian employees than in Bulgarian employees. A possible explanation could be attributed to cross-cultural differences. Bulgaria's culture can be defined as restrained, while Ghana's culture is categorized as indulgent (Hofstede, 2011). A restrained society emphasizes conformity, reducing individuals' perception of positive well-being factors. An indulgent society

emphasizes the promotion of positive emotions and feelings. This could account for the cultural differences in terms of inclusive leadership and work engagement across Bulgaria and Ghana.

The Bulgarian sample exhibited a positive relationship for organizational identification mediating the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement. It was found to be significant than that of their Ghanaian counterpart. There could be an alternate explanation for Bulgarian employees' organizational identification which goes above and beyond the role of inclusive leadership. Ilieva (1999) argues that organizational identification in Bulgaria is generally subjected to its economical and political conditions. Until the end of Communism, (the early 1990's), organizations were a part of a closed social system (Minkov, 2011), preventing employees from exploring different opportunities. In addition, a lack of favorable job opportunities forced employees to become morally obligated to their current employers (Ilieva, 1999). As the mean age for the Bulgarian sample is 40.47 years, this places the average participant within the tail end of the Communist rule. As Minkov (2011) describes the rather slow transition from communism to democracy in Bulgaria, I cannot discount the possibility of previously learned moral obligations to still have an effect on current work attitudes.

When examining organizational identification in Ghana and relating it to work engagement and burnout, as well as, its role as a mediator, there was no significant relationships found. From a psychological/theoretical viewpoint, I explain this insignificance through another of Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions: Collectivism. In collectivistic societies, pursuit of individual autonomy is often viewed as selfish and a betrayal of the in-group (Hofstede, 2011). Employer-employee relationships are perceived in close family terms and individuals refer to their organization as part of their individuality (Agyemang, & Ofei, 2013). Ghana scores high on this scale, a score of 85, and is considered a collectivistic society

(Hofstede, 2011). In light of this fact, perhaps Ghanaian employees do not perceive organizational identification as a valuable contribution to their work engagement or burnout; identifying with one's organization reflects a natural function as collectivists.

Evidently, organizational identification did not contribute to burnout. It also proved insignificant as a mediator for the relationship between inclusive leadership and burnout. In Bulgaria, this inconsistency could be explained by peoples' general tendency to perceive their work as unpleasant and simply a means to an income (Minkov, 2011); suggesting preconceived negative feelings towards their work environment. Therefore, organizational identification, in itself, is not enough to alleviate feelings of burnout in Bulgarian employees. Furthermore, in Bulgaria organizational identification was more important as a mediator for the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement, supporting its insignificance as a mediator towards inclusive leadership and burnout. As discussed, in Ghana, organizational identification could have been perceived as a concept that adds little value to the contribution of employee well-being.

Practical Implications

My study has demonstrated relevance to the field of leadership and employee well-being for Human Resource (HR) Professionals to take into consideration. Inclusive leadership was confirmed as a valuable style of leading, by increasing employees' work engagement and alleviating feelings of burnout. HR Professionals should be aware of the benefits that accompany inclusive leadership in the workplace and should encourage its implementation within organizations. Simply encouraging leaders to empower and acknowledge their employees' needs could prove beneficial not only for the employee, but also for the employer. The employee feels respected and recognized as an individual, and in turn they repay the organization through being engaged in their work.

My study further suggests that inclusive behavior fosters a positive organizational identification. Managers and supervisors should be aware that when employees feel included - for instance, contributing to an important decision - they are more likely to identify with the organization itself and in turn experience a higher level of motivation and exceed in their task performance (Reade, 2001; Tyler & Blader, 2001). Organizations would benefit from educating leaders on the benefits of inclusive leadership through special trainings and workshops.

Finally, HR professionals should be aware of the cultural differences that accompany every individual. As demonstrated in my study, cultural differences do exist within leadership, organizational identification and well-being. The evaluation and meaning of many leader and follower behaviors and characteristics may also strongly vary in different cultures. For instance, in a society that is culturally restrained and where hierarchies within organizations are prevalent, follower inclusion might be interpreted as a weakness, whereas in indulgent societies, where the focus lays on collectivism and positive feelings, the same inclusion is likely to prove a necessity for an effective leadership. Thus, international organizations should strive to make their leaders aware of the role that culture can have on leadership practices, showing more openness and flexibility, especially when leading culturally diverse teams.

Limitations and directions for future research

A limitation of my study could be related to the classification of Bulgaria and Ghana as two opposing cultures in accordance with Hofstede's (2011) indulgence-restraint cultural dimension. Despite using theory and previous research that supports Bulgaria to be a restraint society and Ghana an indulgent society, Vauclair (2009) has suggested that Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions can not be replicated at an individual-level, making it difficult to generalize outcomes to individuals when they are assessed at the country-level. A

recommendation for a future study is to include questions regarding one's individual perception of cultural values and compare countries based on those findings.

Another potential drawback could be the design of my study being cross-sectional; where data is collected at a single point in time. A shortcoming of cross-sectional data is that it is difficult to make any statements about causality (Bowen & Wiersema, 1999), as exposure and outcome are assessed simultaneously. Furthermore, given that organizations and personnel are constantly changing and evolving, leadership should be adaptable and also experience certain transformations. It would be ideal for a future study to implement a longitudinal design to examine closely the cause and effect between inclusive leadership, organizational identification and well-being, in order to identify exactly why and how leadership practices change over time.

A final limitation of my study could be attributed to participants' occupation moderating the relationship. Most studies on burnout in Ghana have been conducted with employees from the education sector (eg., Addison & Yankyera, 2015). The educational system in Ghana is currently undergoing many transformations and changes; hence burnout has been mainly studied among teachers working in schools. The data I collected from Ghana was inclusive of participants from all professional backgrounds; hence it could have moderated the significance level in terms of burnout. Perhaps, controlling for occupational background and collecting data from certain categories of services, could be further investigated in a similar study to understand whether the type of occupation has an influence on well-being.

Conclusion

There have been many variations in current literature regarding leadership practices and their effects on employee well-being, with suggestions that identity could be recognized as a buffer against these effects. My cross-cultural study sought to demonstrate the favorable

effects of inclusive leadership on employees' well-being and the effect of organizational identification as a mediator for the latter two. Leaders who adopt this style are more likely to positively influence employees' work engagement, alleviate feelings of burnout and further contribute to employees' organizational identification. Inclusive leadership is essential for both the employee and the employer; when an employee identifies with the organization, they are more likely to experience positive feelings while repaying the organization through work engagement. My study further sought to contribute to current literature - reporting a need for comparative cross-national leadership studies - and supported the idea that leaders in multinational companies must recognize cultural diversity and differences in individuals' perceptions. As today's workforce is becoming more culturally diverse, inclusion might be the answer to leadership controversies.

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